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British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765. By GEORGE LOUIS BEER, sometime Lecturer in History at Columbia University. (New York: The Macmillan Company. 1907. Pp. x, 327.)

The most conspicuous feature of Mr. Beer's essay is its documentation. No similar work on American colonial history has ever been placed on a securer foundation of documentary evidence than has this admirable study of British colonial policy. Mr. Beer has gone directly to sources hitherto inadequately searched or in many respects largely unknown—the books and papers of the British governmental departments—and has drawn therefrom, with extraordinary care and thoroughness, the story which these records have to tell. In the presence of so much speculation regarding the causes of the rupture between Great Britain and her continental American colonies, it is a matter of congratulation that one scholar has shown himself willing to break away from the traditional attitudes of past historians, and to undergo the drudgery which systematic research in the public record office demands. The results are in the highest degree scholarly and convincing. Writers on British colonial policy have largely taken it for granted that in its attitude toward America the home government was either stupid and purposeless or obstinate and malevolent. Mr. Beer demonstrates with entire success that it was endeavoring to carry out a policy that was definite, statesmanlike and consistent, and that this policy seemed hostile only because it was antagonistic to the existing conditions and tendencies in America, where the colonists were so far self-governing and independent that they refused to subordinate their particular needs and interests to the larger imperial concerns which British statesmen were endeavoring to promote.

Mr. Beer has shown that this antagonism was not a matter of principle or theory, the creation of doctrinaire statesmen, but a conflict of two opposing tendencies; one toward empire, the other toward local self-government. Englishmen saw only the Greater Britain that lay before them, of which the colonies were to form a necessary and integral part; the colonists saw only their local liberties and privileges and resented every attempt of the mother country to absorb them into the great imperial system. The colonial side of the case has been repeatedly told; the British side has never before found a narrator, for the simple reason that no one has ever before taken pains to find out what it was that the British authorities were really trying to do. Thus the charges of oppression formulated in the Declaration of Independence were true

only when viewed from the colonial standpoint, they were not true when interpreted in the light of British policy. On the other hand, the apathy and procrastination of the colonies were wholly misunderstood in England, where they were construed as due to an obstinate desire to thwart British plans.

Mr. Beer's investigation has not only made it possible to set the historian right as to the larger issues but it has also led to the correction of a number of minor points that have passed current in our text books. Mr. Beer shows that Franklin grossly misrepresented the British government when he said that it disapproved of the Albany plan of union because it was too democratic, and that in point of effect the crown took no action whatever on the scheme (23 note). He confirms Ashley's view that the attitude of the colonists toward the navigation acts was one of acquiescence and he insists that these acts played little part in bringing on the rupture (208). He asserts that the figures generally given to show the amount of foreign merchandise smuggled into the colonies are largely guess work and deems the estimates of contemporary pamphleteers wholly unreliable. He deems the figures given at the time to illustrate American consumption of tea far too large (245-246), and Franklin's estimate of the men raised, paid and clothed by the colonies during the French and Indian war, in the main, a gross exaggeration. In fact, he feels justified in maintaining that the general broad statements made during the heated controversy of this period, "in so far as they imply that the colonies as a whole were zealous in prosecuting the war are diametrically opposed to the actual facts" (270 note).

Mr. Beer's indictment of the colonies, particularly of the two leading commercial colonies, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania, is a severe one. He shows upon unimpeachable evidence that not only did they, and others, refuse to coöperate in the defense of the colonies in America and betray a lamentable want of public spirit in every crisis, but that they performed covertly what might legitimately be deemed acts of treason against the British government by trading with the enemy in time of war (90-92). The colonial trade in Indian goods with the French enabled them, he thinks, "to keep their promise with the Indians, which in turn encouraged the Cherokees to keep up their war with the English, and almost brought the Creeks to an open rupture." The trade in other goods enabled the French "to equip privateers which inflicted much suffering and prevented the capture of the French West Indies" by the English. Our writers on colonial history would do well to set over against the "oppression" of George III the "treason" of the colonists.

Mr. Beer does justice to that neglected colonial governor, Shirley of Massachusetts, whose influence on the history of the empire he rightly believes has been most inadequately recognized (140). He states what every reader of Shirley's elaborate correspondence knows, that Shirley was one of the few far-sighted governors in America and in no sense deserving to be classed with incompetent and office-seeking politicians.

The chief weakness of Mr. Beer's essay is its neglect of the colonial side of the case. Such neglect is a weakness inherent in any exclusive use of the British state papers. The future historian will need to treat both aspects together, balancing and proportioning the evidence and building up a symmetrical structure. Hitherto, but one side of the case has been presented, the other, alternately condemned and condoned, has been either misrepresented or altogether omitted. It is but just that the balance should be restored and that the British records should be allowed at last to tell their own story.

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English Local Government from the Revolution to the Municipal Corporations Act. Vols. ii, iii. *The Manor and the Borough.* By SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB. (New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 1908. Pp. viii, vi + 858.)

These two volumes constitute the second installment of the great work on English local government which was outlined by Mr. and Mrs. Webb when they published the first volume at the end of 1906.¹ The first volume covered the parish and the county, and described local government in these areas, during the years from 1689 to 1835, by vestry meetings and county benches of magistrates. In the present volumes, Mr. and Mrs. Webb carry on the story to the manor and the borough. The manor, in 1689, was already decadent as a unit of local government; but the lord of the manor still held the court baron and the court leet; and an understanding of the organization of the manor is, as Mr. and Mrs. Webb show, absolutely necessary for a proper comprehension of the organization and government of the English boroughs, which in most cases had passed through the stage of manorial boroughs before attaining their independence of the lord of the manor, through the acquisition of their charters of incorporation.

¹ This volume was reviewed in *Political Science Review* of February, 1907.